

Central MRS Meeting Notes
October 25, 2007
Wilson County DSS

Counties Present: Beaufort, Bladen, Brunswick, Craven, Currituck, Halifax, Harnett, Moore, Nash, New Hanover, Onslow, Pamlico, Scotland, Wake, Wayne, Wilson.

Introductions

News from Raleigh

Older Youth

Chapter 5 Jurisdictions

Other

News from Raleigh

- MRS is really almost in DataWarehouse the DCD letter should come out next week or so. The DCD letter explains how to access DW and how to use the State Sanctioned queries even if you do not understand how to build queries yourself.
- We are also working on a 5106 Users Manual and will take it to Children s Services in November.
- DCD letter going out today talking about entry of pre-MRS 210 cases in order to be able to key the current 109 cases, and about transfer cases and other cases that will not be entered into the system.
- Heather will be doing trainings on MRS 5106, the paper form, the database, and DataWarehouse in early November, so let her know if you would like her to come to your county.
- Review the other DCD letters that came out since last meeting: names on RIL, Results of Review, Central Registry, Users Manual update, Longscan project, Foster Home Recruitment and Retention project.
- Rick talked about AOC contract that provides training for county workers to be able to check criminal records. We have also found that if you have access to this you can also check the civil records so that workers could check to see if there was a protective order for DV. DCD letter went out regarding this yesterday.
- System of Care Conference in Winston Salem Dec 3 & 4.
- Krista Kinley from Forsyth emailed Holly a grant opportunity from the Brookdale Foundation Relatives as Parents program . For creating or expanding services to grandparents or other relatives acting as parents to children.
- After the Federal CFSR the Administration for Child and Families had asked to post MRS on their web site as best practice. We are able to be there because of open minds, willing spirits and lots of commitment and work on the part of all of you and your colleagues. Take a look for yourself, and give yourselves a big round of applause! <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwmonitoring/promise/index.htm>
- Holly and Patrick have completed an application to JKF School of Government for MRS to receive an Innovations in American Government Award an award process that recognizes innovations in how government works.

Older Youth Joan McAllister, the LINKS coordinator, was here to discuss. This was a concern in our CFSR that we are not serving older youth like we should be.

- The LINKS program serves young people that are or were in foster care as a teenager. They are eligible up until age 21 if they were ever in foster care as a teenager.
- Purpose of the program is to help young people to develop the capacity to achieve positive outcomes.
- It is different to help people to learn to achieve for themselves than to do it for them.
- Seven outcomes that we are trying to help them achieve:
 - Safe and Stable Housing- most children (60%) go back to their own families but if not, at least stay in the same community. Up to \$1,000 to help them make the transition to their own place to live. Some money to help with incidentals (furniture etc.)
 - Sufficient Income enough money to meet their basic needs. Sometimes do some crisis assistance.
 - Education/Vocational training we have had education training voucher for kids that were in care on or after their 17 birthday, and the legislature has passed a bill allowing children who age out of care or were adopted after age 12 a free ride at any UNC college (passed July of 2007).
 - Avoiding High Risk Behavior if you don't feel good about yourself or have supports it is harder to do.
 - Postpone Parenthood obviously want to encourage them to postpone becoming a parent.
 - Access to Health Care kids that age out of foster care are automatically eligible to Medicaid until they are 21 regardless of income or other factors.
 - Personal Support Network > 5 these kids need a support network that does not include the social worker and LINKS coordinator. People that they can call when they are having troubles and to avoid high risk behaviors. This, to Joan, is the most important one. If you have this one, you can use these folks to help with all the other six outcomes.
- The kids that come into LINKS sometimes don't have families so when we talk about serving families, we kind of overlook these kids. Joan made handouts comparing MRS and Positive Youth Development. (For a copy of this handout, please contact Joan.)
- Handout also includes a permanency pact.
- We have some agency policies that do not encourage kids to develop support systems. Need to look more closely at those and make sure that we are not following the policy but in doing that cutting them off from developing a support system.
- Ask the youth who is important to them. We do a lot of things, to try to find supports but sometimes do not ask the child who they think is important.
- CFT meetings get the youth to bring their family. Their family may be their biological family, their best friends dad, even some person that you think is kinda weird that you would rather not have there, but it's who the child wants there.
- Data Mining to find relatives that may have lost contact but would be willing to reconnect with. (Aunt they liked as a child who moved to California when they were young and they don't know how to reconnect with.)

- NC Housing Search website that allows you to search for affordable housing in cities in NC by range of rent you are able to pay. NCHousingSearch.org
- SOAR training training primarily looking at homeless population that will help us help people get SSI and SSBI. The success rate of people that have gone through this training is about 70%. Joan will pass information about this along to Holly and she can get it out via the MRS listserve.
- One of the challenges of MRS still is getting foster care saturated with MRS principles.

Questions/Comments

- Important to try and maintain any things children were doing in their community before they came into care, even if they are placed in another community. One county here has a young man who was a volunteer with the Fire Dept. before coming into care. Although he is not living near the Fire Dept now that he is in care, DSS have made efforts to continue this. This is great, he is making connections that will serve as a support and also is getting vocational training that can result in a career.
- Some people have used sororities and fraternities to volunteer to be mentors. This helps to postpone parenthood, whereas programs like Baby Think It Over does not necessarily.
- Talk to community service organizations (Lions Club, Rotary Clubs) to see if they could mentor.
- Maybe there are adults that Adult Services is working with that have some needs around the house, like mowing the lawn, maybe you can kill two birds with one stone and make a connection that will benefit the youth and the adult.

Jurisdictions formerly Cross County Issues. Terri Reichert was here to discuss this.

Chapter 5

Terri gave a handout of a power point presentation to get a copy of that, email her.

The biggest thing we need to remember is that NC is one state and each county needs to remember that these children are the responsibility of the state as a whole and we are all professionals and should not spend time questioning other workers, but rather deciding what is best for the child and family

- Intake changed this, you will screen the report regardless of the county of residence of the family. Whoever gets the call will screen and send it to the residence county if necessary because the abuse neglect definitions are the same statewide and we all use the same intake tool. Be mindful of time frames and get it to the other county in a timely manner.
- Guidance on how to determine residence.
- Assigning cases - guidance on how to assign when there are multiple counties involved. Basically if you have an open assessment and the family moved you will finish the assessment you may have to ask about her county to help you finish it. This is to try and stop county hopping families and ensure that families do not fall through the cracks.

- Initiation - what if you talked to mom and find out kids have moved to another county to live with dad. Will need to talk to the county and find out what is in the best interest of the family.
- Issues with the intake piece the county that you are trying to send it to doesn't think it meets the intake criteria but you have already screened it in. Once a screening decision has been made, it stands and the other county has to take it, they can't second guess you. The only time this is not the case, is when county B just got the exact same information on the same incident and did an assessment and it was nothing, and they have documentation they can respond to the original reporter saying that they did not accept the report. Who has the liability if county B refuses to take it? We will ask the attorney. There will be consequences on your CFSR if you are not following policy.
- Liability in a practical sense think about who's door will the press show up on? This is not the legal answer, but that is a piece of it. And really - do you want another county making a decision on something that is happening in your county?
- The general rule of thumb is that if you have made contact you keep the case if you have initiated it. There are some exceptions.
 - Is it a planned move that everyone knew about?
 - Is it in the families best interest to transfer the case?
- Communication is the key.
- If this family lives in your county and they are found to be In Need of Services, you will be the one having to provide services, so why wouldn't you want to be the one to do the assessment.
- Suggestion was to get together with your border counties and set up a protocol before you are in the middle of a case where emotions are running high and there are specifics. Terri will come to this meeting and help make sure that your protocol meets policy and help facilitate the meeting.
- Is the definition of initiation any contact besides the initial report? Basically, yes.
- What if you have to make a call to the school system or a service provider to determine where the family lives no, that is not initiation.
- Requests for assistance when you receive one of these you need to honor it even if you disagree with it and why it is being done. This has been hard for some counties. The policy says you shall honor the request. And you should do it in a timely manner. (There are timeframes in the policy depending on what the request is for.)
- Had a long discussion about if foster homes could be family assessments, and decided that right now they had to be investigative assessments. This was partially a legal decision.
- Out of home assessments, created a new form about how to notify DSS, DCD, and Div of Health Services Regulation (formerly Division of Facility Services) about an investigation on a facility. DHSR said they were getting totally random information regarding an investigation. This form is the DSS 5282.
- Revised the DSS 1797, which was an old form talks about placement. Was traditionally for foster care cases when you placed a child out of county, but found that where were placement issue when children were still in 210 and placed with kinship placements out of county. Intercounty agreement on the placement of children is the new name of the form. Any time you place a child in another county need to do this.

- Directors were not aware of the extent of these problems. They requested that before county staff notify a CPR that they make sure the Directors are aware. Only if the two Directors cannot reach an agreement should a CPR be called.

Questions

- Change of venue when you need to transfer a case provide notice to the county that you are preparing to change venue, that county has to know that you are planning to do this. The second county has the option to decline to appear and sign a waiver.
- Transfer of venue is not automatically a transfer of custody.
- What happens if a county transfers but they never gave notice? We really can't speak to that it is a question for the attorneys.
- Transfer of in-home services. It is a requirement that there be communication when an in-home services case is transferred. Some counties are not getting that communication. Terri said that if this happens you should refer to your Director and if the two Directors can't work it out, take it to the CPR. Directors were clear at the Workgroup that they were not aware of these problems and they wanted to be involved.
- Do we still have the buddy county system? Yes. There is talk of revising it, but has not happened. This was set up by the Directors Association. It is perfectly ok to have established your own informal buddies.

Other issues:

What about situations where the judge places a child into DSS custody so there was no 210 assessment? Counties were thinking that this is a 5th reason that you would not enter into MRS. However according to policy there should be an assessment even if the judge places them in custody.

- Put a non-secure in front of the judge that day which will get an attorney assigned to the parent. Some judges are not willing to sign these.
- Some counties have talked to their judge and if the judge thinks he may be going to put a child in custody he gives DSS a heads up and we may have a week to talk to the family.
- There are discussion at the state level with DSS and AOC but these will never replace the more beneficial talks at the local level.

Difficulties with the manual

- County said Chapter 8 is hard to read, more like a novel and not as easy to find specific information that you may be looking for.
- Patrick asked that suggestions and specifics be emailed to him. We are always trying to make the manual better, but not likely to do another complete overhaul like we did in January anytime soon.

November meetings:

Central: Cabarrus Co. November 27th

Western: AB Tech Buncombe November 30th

East: Hertford Co November 28th